

MINUTES  
ALTOONA CITY PLANNING COMMISSION  
Tuesday, July 2, 2019

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Randy Isenberg, Chairperson  
Michael Haire, Vice Secretary  
Dave Albright, Vice Chairperson  
James Dixon  
Richard Haines

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Jennifer Mikolajczk, Secretary  
Chuck Myers

**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT STAFF PRESENT**

Lee Slusser, Director Community Development  
Nick Ardizzone, Property and Program Coordinator

**GUESTS PRESENT**

John Sepp – Penn Terra Engineering – Drenning Center  
Scott Durbin – Durbin Company – Drenning Center  
Pam Nelson – 3714 Beale Avenue - Zoning Change  
Bill Kibler – Altoona Mirror

The Altoona City Planning Commission held its monthly meeting on July 2, 2019 at 3:00 P.M. in the Public Meeting Room, City Hall 1301 12th Street, Altoona. Randy Isenberg, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

**ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS**

1. **Approval of meeting minutes of June 4, 2019.**  
The minutes of the June 4, 2019 were read. A motion was made by Richard Haines for approval. Motion was seconded by Michael Haire. Motion carried unanimously.
2. **Public Comment Period**  
No Public Comment at this time.

**SUBDIVISION AND LAND DEVELOPMENT ITEMS**

3. **Drenning Center** – 2300 N. Branch Avenue - Mr. Slusser introduced the subdivision and land development application to construct what is currently being

referred to as the Drenning Center at 2300 North Branch Avenue. This phase of the development proposes some already-underway demolition, merging three parcels into one and the construction of a 9,246 sqft. Office building for the Blair County Community Action Agency and other non-profit social service providers. A setback variance was obtained from the City Zoning Hearing Board on June 12, 2019, to place the building as shown. In addition to this variance, the following waivers are requested from the Planning Commission

1. 640-63.A(2): No access driveway shall be located within 50 feet of an intersection.
2. 640-63.B(3): Parking facilities all be set back from street right-of-way lines, property lines, and building foundations a minimum of five feet.
3. 640-63.C(1): Facilities shall be designed so that each vehicle may enter and exit a parking space without maneuvering into a public right-of-way.
4. 640-63.C(3a): All stalls, except for parallel parking stalls, shall be 19 feet long.
5. 640-63.C(5): Stalls shall be accessed through one end only.
6. 640-63.C(7): Curbing shall be placed at the edges of all surfaces, areas including islands.
7. 640-63.E(1): Landscaping shall be required to provide definition and traffic control within a parking lot.
8. 640-63.E: Provide a list of all owners of land abutting the proposal and directly across any streets, watercourses, or railroads. For corner properties this shall include the land diagonally across the intersection as well.
9. 640-29.B(4): Show and label the owner of all abutting properties (including across streets). For corner properties, this shall include the land diagonally across the intersection as well.
10. 640-64: Pedestrian facilities.

Mr. Slusser went on to explain the Pedestrian Facilities. The City of Altoona is applying for money to do a Streetscape along Beale Avenue that will redo sidewalks and add a bike lane. Public works is a little hesitant to have the developers do this work and then the City come along, tear it up and do the work again. The Resolution has been written so that potentially the City has 5 years to do the development. If it is not done within the 5 years the developer will then need to come back in and do the sidewalks. Mr. Slusser then introduced Mr. John Sepp of Penn Terra Engineering to answer any questions that the Commission has. A motion was made by Michael Haire to approve Resolution No. 07-02-19-PAC 19-0008, approving the Drenning Center, 2300 North Branch Avenue, LLC Land Development Plan with the requested waivers. Motion was seconded by Dave Albright. Motion passed unanimously.

**RESOLUTION NO. 07-02-19-PAC19-0008**  
**A RESOLUTION APPROVING THE DRENNING CENTER, 2300 NORTH BRANCH**  
**AVENUE, LLC LAND DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

WHEREAS an application for a land development project has been filed with the Altoona City Planning Commission (hereinafter "ACPC") by Drenning, Inc. (hereinafter referred to as the "DEVELOPER"); and

WHEREAS, the DEVELOPER desires to subdivide and redevelop the existing building at the corner of Beale Avenue, 23<sup>rd</sup> Street and North Branch Avenue Alley as a Community Action building which will house offices for area non-profits, an existing vacant building will be demolished and a new 9,246 sf office will be constructed at 2300 North Branch Avenue, Altoona, Pennsylvania; and

WHEREAS, staff has reviewed the LAND DEVELOPMENT PLAN, incorporated herein by this reference and filed with the ACPC by the Developer, and has found it to be in compliance excepting waiver requests, as a FINAL LAND DEVELOPMENT with all applicable provisions of the City of Altoona's zoning, subdivision/land development, and storm water ordinances subject to the conditions of this resolution; and

WHEREAS, the ACPC has determined that this LAND DEVELOPMENT PLAN constitutes a FINAL LAND DEVELOPMENT PLAN in full compliance with the City of Altoona's zoning, subdivision/land development, and storm water ordinances subject to the conditions of this resolution; and

WHEREAS, the ACPC has the power to APPROVE modifications to the City of Altoona's subdivision and land development requirements, and the Developer has requested the following waivers that are hereby approved by the ACPC:

1. §640-63.A(2): No access driveway shall be located within 50 feet of an intersection or as otherwise directed by the Planning Commission. Access driveways serving parking facilities of more than 25 spaces shall not be located closer than 100 feet to an intersection. ***The access located within 50 feet of the Beale Avenue/23<sup>rd</sup> Street intersection is an entrance only and no vehicles will utilize this access to leave the site. Since Beale Avenue is a one way street, the location of this entrance will not pose any issues at the intersection or driveway entrance. A waiver has been requested.*** Staff does not object to this waiver.
2. §640-63.B(3): Parking facilities shall be set back from street right-of-way lines, property lines, and building foundations a minimum of five feet. ***Bollards have been provided to protect the building from the parking stalls. The parking stalls at the corner of 23<sup>rd</sup> Street and N. Branch Alley will not pose a hazard to the sidewalk along 23<sup>rd</sup> Street or a visual issue. Practically, the entire lot***

- is currently paved and parking is available up to and into the right of ways.* Staff supports this waiver, so long as wheel stops are provided and shown on the final plans.
3. §640-63.C(1): Facilities shall be designed so that each vehicle may enter and exit a parking space without maneuvering into a public right-of-way. ***A waiver is needed for use of the alley for maneuvering for 6 spaces. These stalls have been redesigned to be angled to help facilitate the maneuvering into the alley. Please note that the alley is currently used for access to parking to parking on this lot.*** Staff supports this waiver.
  4. §640-63.C(3a): All stalls, except for parallel parking stalls, shall be 19 feet long. ***A waiver is requested to use 18 foot long stalls. This dimension is adequate for today's vehicles and is a standard in most locations.*** Staff supports this waiver.
  5. §640-63.C(5): Accessways shall be physically separated from any stall rows to which they do not directly provide access. Stalls shall be accessed through one end only. Such separation shall consist of landscaped islands as regulated in §640-65. ***The stalls along the alley are designed to utilize alley for access. Please note that the alley is currently used for access and the traffic flow along the alley is extremely low.*** Staff supports this waiver.
  6. §640-63.C(7): Curbing shall be placed at the edges of all surfaces areas including islands. ***Curbing is not provided along the entrance to Beale Avenue in order to provide flexibility for the site to blend with the ongoing Streetscape Design. Curbing is not provided along North Branch Alley in order to allow vehicles to use the alley for access. Finally, there is no storm sewer on site, so curbing is not provided along some islands to promote and retain sheet flow conditions. Should the grass area to the south side of site require bumper blocks to protect the grass, they will be installed in the future.*** Staff does not object to this waiver.
  7. §640-63.D(2): Parking calculations have been provided – indicating the required parking is a min of 23 and max of 37. ***The project proposes 42 parking stalls in order to minimize the potential for off site parking.*** Staff supports this waiver.
  8. §640-63.I(5): Drive-through driveways shall provide stacking for a minimum of five cars without interfering with parking lot operations, bicycle and pedestrian flow, or street traffic. ***The proposed canopy will serve as a drop off location sheltered from the weather. It will not serve as a typical drive through such as a restaurant or bank.*** Staff supports this waiver.
  9. §640-63.E(1): Landscaping shall be required to provide definition and traffic control within a parking lot. Such landscaping shall be provide at the ends of all stall rows, between parking spaces and access drives which do not directly serve... There does not appear to be any separation between the parking stalls and North Branch Alley. ***The stalls along the alley are designed to utilize the alley for access.***

***Please note that alley is currently used for access and the traffic flow along the alley is extremely low.*** Staff does not object to this waiver.

10. §640-29.E: Provide a list of all owners of land abutting the proposal and directly across any streets watercourses, or railroads. For corner properties, this shall include the land diagonally across the intersection as well. ***The property is bound by rights of ways on three sides. The proposed project will significantly improve the appearance of this property. Providing a list of property owners across the street and showing these owners on the plan will not improve or add to the design of the project.*** Staff supports this waiver.
11. §640-29.B(4): Show and label the owner of all abutting properties (including across streets). For corner properties, this shall include the land diagonally across the intersection as well. ***The property is bound by rights of ways on three sides. The proposed project will significantly improve the appearance of this property. Providing a list of property owners across the street and showing these owners on the plan will not improve or add to the design of the project.*** Staff supports this waiver.
12. §640-64 Pedestrian facilities. ***The City of Altoona is proposing a streetscape project for Beale Avenue from the corner of 23<sup>rd</sup> Street and continuing southwest west to the property line of said development. This includes a new ADA ramp at the corner of 23<sup>rd</sup> Street and Beale Avenue and 18" inch Curb / 5' foot sidewalk from said ramp location and following along Beale Avenue to property line as indicated on plan sheet. The city hereby requests a (5) five year waiver for this portion of the project to allow for the development and construction of said streetscape and should this project not be completed by July 2, 2024 the Developer must post 110% surety of waived section and have complete in place within (1) year.*** Staff does not object to this (5) five year waiver.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Planning Commission of the City of Altoona, Blair County, Pennsylvania, that the application and plans, as filed by the DEVELOPER, are hereby approved subject to the following conditions:

1. A letter from the Blair County Conservation District approving the plan shall be provided to the City. (Chapter 620)
2. Any necessary permits from DEP must be provided.
3. The ACPC Consulting Engineer's comments contained in the Engineer's letter to the City dated June 24, 2019 and attached hereto must be satisfied.
4. Financial security to cover the cost of all public improvements must be provided to the City prior to plan signature. (Chapter 640)
5. A developer's agreement prepared by the ACPC must be executed by the Developer.
6. All required signatures must be obtained on the plan.

7. The conditions of the plan must be accepted in writing by developer within 30 days of plan approval.
8. A copy of the RECORDED plan must be provided to the ACPC as soon as it is recorded.
9. All conditions must be met, fees paid, and the plan signed and recorded within the plan deadline.

RESOLVED by the Altoona City Planning Commission this second day of July,  
2019

ATTEST:

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Secretary

Chair

4. **Staff Level Reviews** – Staff has been working on the following subdivision/land development applications since the June 5, 2019, regular meeting.
  1. 3420 Pleasant Valley Blvd – Staff Level Review of an amended Land Development for Jimmy Johns Sandwich Shop to add a Drive Thru Window and Lane on the end of the building.
  2. 1516 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue – Lexington Mall Partners – Staff Level Review of an amended Land Development to add a small bump out on the back of the building to hold a piece of equipment that was originally to be installed on the roof. It has been determined that it would cause structural issues if placed on the roof.
  3. 2525 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Lear, Subdivision – Staff Level Review – Final Approval – Out for Recording
  4. 508 50<sup>th</sup> Street, Subdivision – Staff Level Review- Final Approval – Waiting for signed plans to be returned from Florida.

#### **Urban Redevelopment**

5. **Spot Blight Declaration** – Lee Slusser presented the following properties to the blighted program.

**3816 W. Chestnut Avenue**

Owner: Jerret T. Aungst

3816 W. Chestnut

Altoona, PA 16602



Property is vacant and in substandard condition. Property was submitted to the Blighted Property Demo Program on June 21, 2019. Property is fire damaged beyond repair. Fire Marshall has stated that the owner did not have insurance and needs assistance for the demolition. Electric and gas are disconnected but meters still need removed. Taxes are owed for 2018 \$1,565.65. Under the 2009 International Property Maintenance Code, the City will demolish the structure and place a lien on the property for the cost of demolition. Motion was made by Dave Albright to declare the property blighted. Jim Dixon seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

**202-204 Willow Avenue**

Owner: Doris Wright & Adam Caldwell

204 Willow Avenue

Altoona, PA 16601

Property is vacant and in substandard condition. Property was submitted to the Blighted Property Demo Program on June 21, 2019. Property is residential and is in poor condition, porch, gutters, downspouts, awnings are falling off. Foundation is full of cracks. Roof is in deteriorated condition. All utilities are off. Taxes owed for 2017 and 2018 totaling \$1,430.01. Under the 2009 International Property Maintenance Code, the City will demolish the structure and place a lien on the property for the cost of demolition. The Commission decided to table this property and ask for more information to be brought to the next meeting.

**2013-15 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue**

Owner: Michel Reyes Martinez

170 NW 27 Ct.

Miami, FL 33125

Property is vacant and in substandard condition. Property was submitted to the Blighted Property Demo Program on June 11, 2019. Property exterior is in poor condition along with the roof, windows and foundation. Interior ceilings are falling due to water damage. House has been abandoned by the property owner and is in major disrepair. Racoons have made residence in the property. Neighbors have been complaining. Water and gas are off, electric is unknown. Taxes are current. Under the 2009 International Property Maintenance Code, the City will demolish the structure and place a lien on the property for the cost of demolition. Motion was made by Jim Dixon to declare the property blighted. Michael Haire seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

**921 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue**

Owner: Joy A. Phillips

308 22<sup>nd</sup> Avenue

Altoona, PA 16601

This property was sold at the 6/19/19 Judicial Tax Sale to: Nirvana Enterprise Co., P.O. Box 111, Patton, PA 16668 – We will not determine blight at this time.

## **Zoning**

6. **Proposed Zoning Ordinance Amendments** –On June 17, 2019, Altoona City Council introduced an ordinance that would, if enacted, amend the City’s zoning (Chapter 800 of the *Code of the City of Altoona*). This ordinance is officially summarized as follows.

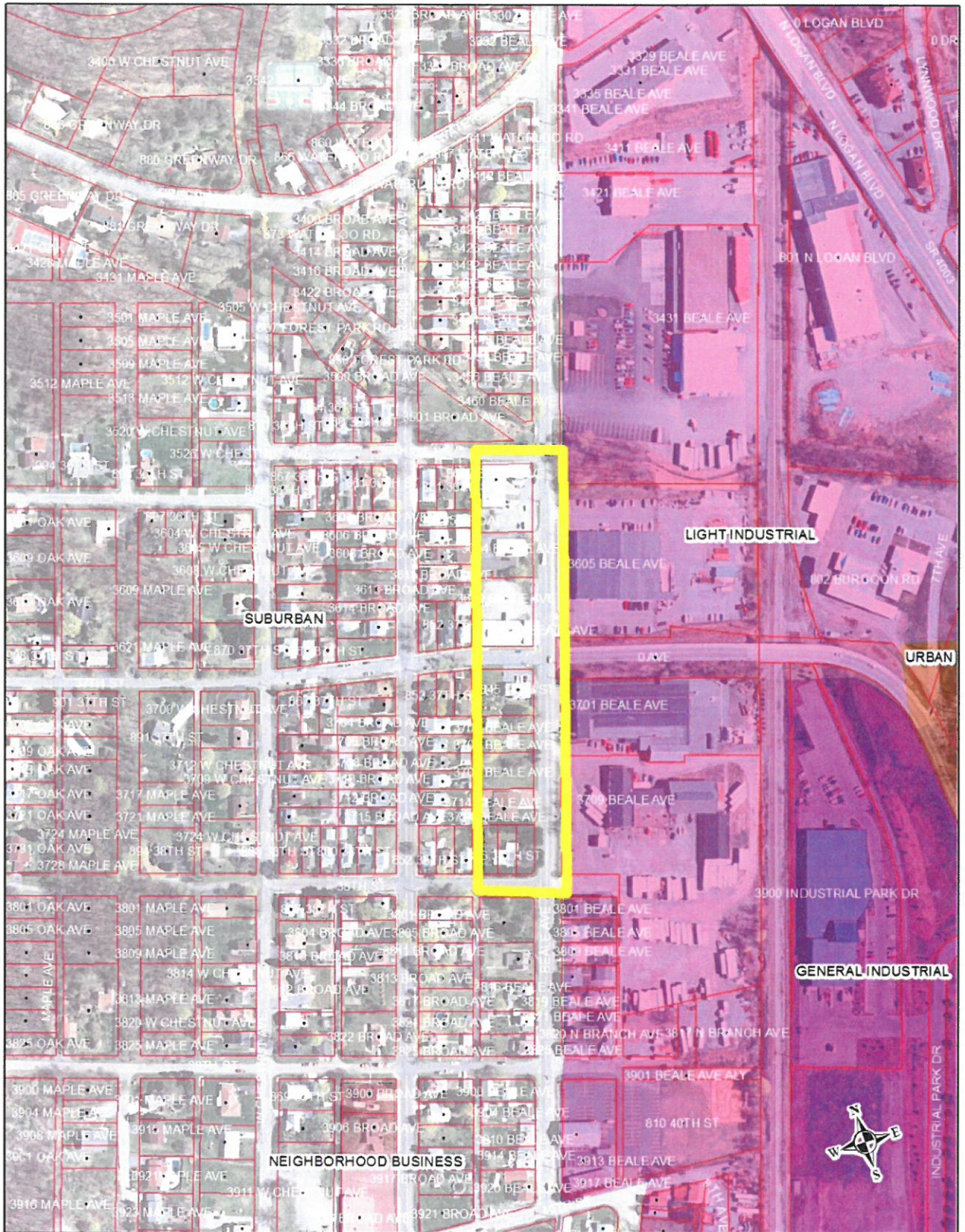
"AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF ALTOONA AMENDING THE CODE OF THE CITY OF ALTOONA CHAPTER 800 ENTITLED "ZONING" TO: ADD DEFINITIONS FOR "ROOMING HOUSES;" REMOVE DEFINITIONS FOR "STRUCTURAL ALTERATIONS," "FINANCIAL SECURITY," "HOME-BASED BUSINESS," "MODIFICATIONS," "DIMENSIONAL VARIANCE," "HARDSHIP VARIANCE," "PLANNING VARIANCE," "USE VARIANCE," AND "VARIATION;" AMEND THE DEFINITIONS OF "FAMILY" AND "VARIANCE;" AMEND SECTION 800-27 TO RE-ZONE PROPERTY ON THE NORTHWEST SIDE OF BEALE AVENUE BETWEEN 36TH AND 38TH STREET FROM R-S SUBURBAN RESIDENTIAL TO L-I LIGHT INDUSTRIAL; DELETE SECTION 800-37 ENTITLED "LAND USES NOT CATEGORIZED IN ARTICLE V;" UPDATE SECTION 800-41 ENTITLED "HOME BASED BUSINESSES" TO MATCH THE PENNSYLVANIA MUNICIPALITIES PLANNING CODE; AMEND SECTION 800-44 ENTITLED "FARMING" TO BRING THIS CHAPTER INTO CONFORMANCE WITH THE RIGHT TO FARM LAWS; REMOVE A PROVISION OF SECTION 800-47C THAT ENABLES WORK BETWEEN THE ZONING HEARING BOARD AND PLANNING COMMISSION; REMOVE SPECIAL EXCEPTION PROVISIONS FOR FENCES IN ALL ZONING DISTRICTS; PERMIT ROOMING HOUSES OR BOARDINGHOUSES AS SPECIAL EXCEPTIONS IN THE R-U URBAN RESIDENTIAL ZONE, M-RC RESIDENTIAL-COMMERCIAL MIXED USE ZONE, AND C-NB NEIGHBORHOOD BUSINESS COMMERCIAL ZONE; PERMIT DORMITORIES AS A SPECIAL EXCEPTION IN THE C-CB CENTRAL BUSINESS COMMERCIAL ZONE; PROVIDE FOR A PURPOSE,



REAFFIRMATION AND RESTATEMENT OF CHAPTER 800 AS AMENDED; PROVIDE SEVERABILITY OF PROVISIONS; AND PROVIDE A REPEALER OF INCONSISTENT PROVISIONS; AND PROVIDE AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

To summarize this summary, this ordinance would...

1. Define "rooming houses" separately from "boarding houses."
2. Permit dormitories in the Central Business Zoning Districts.
3. Clean up some unused definitions.
4. Fix inconsistencies with state laws.
5. Rezone the area shown below from the Suburban Residential Zone to the Light Industrial Zone.





Section 609c of the *Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code* (Act of 1968, P.L. 805, No. 247 as reenacted and amended) requires that any proposed amendments to the zoning or subdivision and land development regulations be reviewed by the City Planning Commission before they are enacted. To that end, the Commission will take any public comment on the proposal after staff briefly explains it. Then, staff will help the Commission draft a recommendation on the proposed amendments for Altoona City Council.

The Altoona City Planning Commission reviewed the proposed amendments to Chapter 800 (Zoning) of the *Code of the City of Altoona* that were introduced as an ordinance by Altoona City Council on June 12, 2019. These amendments would, if adopted, define “rooming houses” separately from “boarding houses,” permit dormitories in the Central Business Zoning District, clean up some unused definitions, fix inconsistencies with state laws, and rezone the 3600 and 3700 blocks of Beale Avenue (west side) from the Suburban Residential Zone to the Light Industrial Zone.

After some discussion, A motion was made by Richard Haines that the Altoona City Planning Commission recommended that future map changes be presented in separate ordinances from textual ordinances. The Commission supported all of the proposed textual changes. However, the Commission recommended against the rezoning of the 3600 and 3700 blocks of Beale Avenue to Light Industrial. The Commission was concerned about the long term impacts of the uses that could be established in Light Industrial on the immediately adjacent, very stable residential neighborhood. Even rentable storage, which is the specific activity mentioned by the applicant, has significant traffic and impacts at odd hours. Motion was seconded by Dave Albright. Motion passed unanimously.

Note that Section 303 of the *Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code* (Act of 1968, P.L. 805, No.247, as reenacted and amended) requires that municipal planning commissions review all proposals to amend their zoning, subdivision, or land development regulations after a comprehensive plan has been adopted. The recommendation above is offered to satisfy this state law. Should Altoona City Council have any questions about this recommendation, they are encouraged to contact Mr. Slusser at their convenience.

## **INFORMATIONAL ITEMS**

### **8. Planning Reports**

- a. Grantsmanship activities (CDBG and HOME) – No report.

- b. Zoning Hearing Board – No report
  - c. Shade Tree Commission – Still working on new ordinance.
  - d. GAEDC – No meetings through the summer
  - e. Blair County Planning Commission – No report
9.     **Commissioners Forum** – No report
10.    **Questions from the Media and Public**
11.    **Adjournment**  
A motion was made by Michael Haire to adjourn the meeting at 4:50 P.M. Richard Haines seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

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Michael Haire, Vice Secretary